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P O L I S H   P E O P L E ' S   R E P U B L I C

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

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The Development of Education in the

Polish People's Republic

During the Year 1956/57

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The Development of Education in the School Year 1956/57  
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Introduction - Budget - Nursery Schools - Primary Schools - Secondary, General Education Schools - Vocational Schools - Special Schools - Schools for Children of Minority Groups - Schools for Adults - School Organizations - Teacher Training - Educational Congress.

Introduction

The year 1956/57 saw fundamental changes in the organization of school administration. Nearly all vocational schools were transferred to the Ministry of Education, except agricultural schools, mining schools, art schools, and health service schools.

In the current year some changes were made in the curricula of certain subjects. These changes aim at a better adjustment of the curricula to the needs of the school and the age and abilities of pupils, as well as at the elimination of existing blunders, bridging the gulfs and the like.

In the current school year special departments for curricula and textbooks were organized in the Ministry of Education to work out in the best possible way the new curricula and textbooks for the general education schools and vocational schools.

In the year 1956/57 there were animated discussions in the newspapers and at various conferences on the development of education and the reform of the system of education. The results of the discussions held by teachers and pedagogical workers as well as their proposals and motions were put forward by the delegates from different voievodships and districts at an all-Poland Educational Congress convoked in Warsaw from 2 - 5 May 1957 by the Headquarters of the Union of Polish Teachers.

Budget

Financial outlay for education increased by 19,1 per cent as compared with 1956.

In the year 1956 a rise was made in the salaries of all categories of teachers, tutors in children homes, educational

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establishments and special schools, as well as in the salaries of nursery-mistresses.

This increase amounts to 20-25 per cent.

### Nursery Schools

Until recently the children in the towns were admitted into the nursery school at the age of three to four, and they stayed at school for nine to ten hours a day. At present a trend arises to limit the number of the three-to-four year-old in the nursery schools, who need rather a family care, and to increase the number of the five-to-six year-old for whom the school will provide some preparation for the primary school.

The reduction of the time during which the child stays at the nursery school to 5 hours a day is also under project at present, out of regard for the child's nervous system.

Beginning with September 1957 the duration of studies in the pedagogical lyceums for the nursery school mistresses is going to be increased by 1 year to a total of 5 years, to ensure an adequate and qualified teaching staff in the nursery schools.

There is a trend to place on an equal footing the status of the nursery schools mistresses with that of the primary schools teachers, in respect of the conditions of service and pay.

### Primary Schools

In the school year 1956/57 the number of primary schools has increased to the figure of 23.726, i.e. by 503 schools in comparison with the school year 1955/56.

The number of pupils in these schools amounted to 3.654.604 in 1956/57, that means that it had increased approximately by 268.173 pupils /7,9 per cent/ as compared with the previous year.

The number of seven-grade schools amounted to 15.498 in 1956/57 i.e. it had increased by 776 schools as compared with the previous year, mainly because of the raising of the status of rural primary schools. The number of pupils in seven-grade schools increased to 3.310.512, that is by

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267,360 /8,8 per cent/ pupils as compared with the previous year. The percentage of pupils attending the seven-grade schools in 1956/57 amounted to 90,6 per cent.

At present the revision of the network of primary schools is going on in particular in the rural regions to ensure better conditions of attendance and transportation facilities of the children, and to enable pupils to complete the seven-grade school in due time.

Only one teacher teaches at the schools in mountainous areas, forests areas and in the isolated areas in general, the so called "islands", where the number of pupils does not exceed 40 children. Two teachers, as a rule, work in the school with the number of children averaging from forty to seventy, to guarantee, however, the sixth or the seventh form in these schools still one more teacher may be employed.

The decree on the compulsory education of March 23, 1956, extends the time of compulsory education to nine years, up to 16 years of age for the children who did not complete a seven-year course of study in due time. Therefore, the pupil after he is 14 years old either completes his education in the day primary school, or in the school for adults, if he is working in a work establishment where he is taught a trade.

In connection with the introduction of secondary entrance examinations to the eighth form of the general education lyceum the primary leaving exams at the end of the VII grade have been abolished.

In the year under review new curricula have been drawn up for grades V-VII /in the previous year new curricula had been drawn up for grades I-IV/.

It is planned to create the post of an assistant head-master in schools counting more than 300 pupils, in order to facilitate the task of the head-master in the primary school and to raise the level of his work.

#### Secondary, General Education Schools

Seventeen new lyceums giving general education were opened in 1956/57, There is a total of 816 schools of this type in Poland. The number of pupils in lyceums increased by 1.292 as

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compared with the previous year, to a total of 202.713 pupils.

The number of pupils admitted to grade VIII amounts to 25,3 per cent in relation to the number of grade VII graduates. This percentage has increased by 3 per cent as compared with the previous year.

In the school year 1956/57 there began the action of dividing up the eleven-year schools, the so called "giants" that number too many classes /frequently more than 20/ into separate primary schools and lyceums.

The trend is in evidence at present to divide the all-through, eleven-year schools where only the local conditions allow, because the system of the all-through, eleven-year schools embracing primary school and lyceum has not proved practical /too big disparity of age, educational difficulties, difficult work of the director of the school and the like/.

In the year 1956/57 a few changes were made affecting the system of admission of pupils to grade VIII of the general education lyceum and the regulations concerning leaving exams on completing the general education lyceums. Previously there were not any entrance examinations before admission to the general education lyceum, but now the pupils are admitted to the VIIIth grade only after the entrance examinations in Polish and mathematics. In the schools for the minority groups the pupils sit also for the examination in their mother tongue. The exams are both written and oral.

To secure the best possible head-masters in schools the vacancies to the directors' posts are going to be filled by way of competition. The candidates for the post of the secondary school director must be fully qualified to teach in school or establishment of that type, they must possess a considerable teaching experience and at least eight years of practice in the type of secondary school in which they are to be appointed principals. They must also distinguish themselves in their work.

As far as the appointment of principals in the nursery schools is concerned 3 years of practice are required. Five years of practice and one year of additional pedagogical studies are required to get the appointment of the head-master in the primary school.

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Vocational Schools

Reorganization of vocational education began in the year 1956/57. Research were pursued on the organization, planning and administration of vocational schools, with the object to ensure better adaptation of vocational education to the tasks and needs of our economy and, at the same time, to the tasks of training and educating the young professionals. To this end 4.500 questionnaires were sent to the work establishments in order to examine the professional efficiency of the vocational schools graduates. The questionnaires concerned the graduates of the basic vocational schools and the technicums, who had graduated in the years 1953, 1954, 1955. The questionnaires were worked out on the basis of the interviews with the graduates and their superiors in their work establishments. More than 200 professions were thus examined. These questionnaires showed the following:

- a/ the duration of studies<sup>in</sup> vocational schools is too short,
- b/ the pupils in vocational schools are overworked /in particular with their home work/,
- c/ the curricula contain a lot of wrong material and are crammed in general,
- d/ vocational schools have inadequate general education basis /in particular it concerns the Polish language, mathematics, physics, chemistry/: it is necessary to introduce the second foreign, West-European language,
- e/ the nomenclature is unnecessarily subdivided to refer to too many professions.

As a result of the questionnaires the nomenclature was revised and the list of professions taught in basic vocational schools and technicums was cut by half.

It was decided to increase the duration of studies in the basic vocational schools from two years to three years, and even in some cases to four years, and in the technicums of all types to five years.

Vocational schools are residential to a great extent. 60 per cent of pupils board at schools, and in some schools, for instance in mining, metallurgical, transportation and agricultural schools 100 per cent pupils are boarders.

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The percentage of vocational schools pupils receiving scholarships is about 60 per cent, and in some schools it reaches 100 per cent.

At present new types of schools are being set up: continuation schools, schools for agricultural training, schools in the work establishments and technicums with the duration of studies from one to three years after graduation from eleven-year schools.

62 schools for agricultural training have been set up by now in the rural districts and the opening of 600 such schools in the current school year for approximately 100,000 pupils is planned. These schools aim at the extension of vocational education to the young people who graduated from seven-grade primary school.

The duration of the course of these schools is fixed for 2 or 3 years from October to March, followed by practical work on the plots and on farms. The curriculum includes: plant growing, animal husbandry, farming, economic geography, Polish language and mathematics. In the third year pupils specialize in animal husbandry or gardening and the like. Courses are organized also with a view to acquaint pupils with the construction and operation of agricultural machines. The schools for agricultural training are set up by the primary or vocational schools in rural districts. The basic agricultural schools in principle teach pupils from 14 years up to 16 years of age, and sometimes even up to 18 years of age.

The difficulties in vocational education system as well as in general education schools are due mainly to the shortage of school buildings, the still unsatisfactory supplying of schools with furniture and scientific aids, machines, and adequate laboratory and workshop equipment. Some workshop facilities are obsolete. Because of that the problem of school buildings, of scientific aids and the adequate supplying of schools with modern laboratory and workshop facilities is the object of painstaking care.



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### Special Schools

The number of different types of special schools increased by 3-5 per cent in 1956/57, and so did the number of defective children cared for by the state.

A considerable expansion of special schools is expected in the coming years. In particular the network of schools for difficult and morally endangered adolescents from 10 to 18 years of age has increased; in the current year 3 such new schools were set up.

The curricula for special education are being revised and adjusted to the needs of schools.

The question of the methodology of work in special schools is under animated discussion and the method based on "centres of work", recommended by the Institute of Pedagogy for the lower grades /3 lowest grades of special school/ has been introduced into schools this year.

This method is characterized by special system of lessons, which consists in the free correlation of lesson units by the teacher and nondividing the content of the material into separate subjects.

This method is based on one core problem around which other directly connected problems are grouped. We find in this method the logical correlation of the content of the curriculum with a number of separate units, founded on the interests of the child, purposefully guided by the teacher.

This method consists in: 1/ observation, comparing, drawing conclusions, bringing the main characteristics to the foreground, investigating existing causal compounds and the like; 2/ collecting all the material available, connected with the subject under investigation in different way and form, for example: tools used in production, illustrations, pictures, newspaper clippings, news from school and the home; 3/ bringing home the collected information and experiences to the child in a manner based on simple handwork such as clay modelling or on more complicated work where different materials and tools are needed such as cardboard, wood, bark, glue, hammer, nails and the like. Thus all natural bents of children are developed and they get used to the manual and mental work at the same time.

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The method of "centres of work" leads a successful fight against the verbal method and it develops the active attitude of the child, his sense of responsibility, and trains him in team work.

The analysis of the rehabilitation value of the method of "work centres" has been presented in detail in the article by dr Maria Grzegorzewska, an outstanding specialist in the field of special education. The article was published under this title in the quarterly "Special School" concerned with the problems of therapeutic pedagogy /N<sup>o</sup> 1-1957/.

The Institute of Special Pedagogy runs a two-year course for the training of special schools teachers. The tutors follow a course of 2 years. The working tutors and teachers with 2 years of practice at school are admitted to these studies. They are entitled to obtain 2 years leave on full pay, for the time of their studies. They get the diploma of the special school teacher after they have finished a 2-year course of study in the Institute and after they have written their diploma work during the 3rd year of studies. About 50 teachers with diplomas graduate yearly from the Institute of Special Pedagogy.

Recently the guide-books for teachers of special schools for different types of schools and sections of education were worked out.

#### Schools for Children of Minority Groups

In the school year 1956/57 a considerable expansion of Ukrainian schools has to be stressed: the opening of the first grades in lyceums being the nucleus of general education and pedagogical extension lyceums. Likewise the network of extension lyceums and "Teachers' Courses" for other language groups is to increase considerably. Byelorussian Teachers Course /SN/ is already at work and organization of Teachers Courses with the German and Slovak languages is already well under way.

The curricula introduce for the instruction in history the elements of national history, increasing the number of hours allotted weekly for history instruction, to stress the national character by means of teaching the children their national history.

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The Byelorussian, Ukrainian and Slovak philologic studies were organized at the universities side by side with already existing chairs of philology.

#### Adult Education

The number of schools for adults and the number of pupils attending these schools have not shown any considerable change in the current school year. However, the number of courses of foreign languages: English, French, Italian and others have considerably increased.

In the year 1956 was also noted an increase of activity and scope of work of social institutions engaged in education, the popularization of science through popular universities of different types; also non-school forms of adult education have developed.

At present the preparations are going on for the International Seminar on Adult Education, which will be held in Warsaw with the help of Unesco in September 1957. The programme of the Seminar includes the following questions: 1/ Organization and methods of popularizing the natural and social sciences, 2/ Residential adult schools /popular universities/ and educational group work, 3/ School forms of adult education. The delegates from 20 countries will take part in this seminar.

There is a special magazine /a bimonthly/ on adult education, which helps to exchange experiences and views and to discuss methods of teaching and influencing the adult pupils.

#### School Organizations

In the current year after numerous and stormy discussions held at the conferences and in the columns of newspapers on the youth organizations, fundamental changes occurred in this field.

The existing Scouts' Organization has extended its reach. Formerly only the children of primary age group were allowed to belong to the Union of Polish Scouts, but now even pupils attending the lyceums, who are 18 years old, may belong to this organization.

The U.P.S. went back to many rich, traditional forms of Scouts work, unjustly eliminated from the activity of Scouts in the postwar period.

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Thus at present the reorganization of scouting is going on in Poland, new regulations are being worked out and new forms of work introduced. The function of paid instructors, existing before, was abolished and shall now bear the social character. The pupils of lyceums may now belong to the extra-school youth organizations, as the Union of Socialist Youth and the Union of Country Youth.

#### Training of Teachers

In the current school year a heated discussion was going on in all establishments for the training of teachers, in the trade unions organizations and at the vacation courses on the problem of teachers training. There are the following results of this discussion:

- a/ the training of teachers should be based on the secondary general education school,
- b/ the primary schools teachers should be trained in the 3-year Teachers Institutes /it concerns also the nursery-school mistresses/,
- c/ the secondary schools teachers should be trained at the 5-year Universities or in the higher pedagogical schools,
- d/ the principle of practical exams after 2-years' work at school should be reinstated.

The realization of these principles will take some years. In the meanwhile even in the current school year the duration of study in pedagogical lyceums has been increased to 5 years /by one year/.

In the higher pedagogical schools the different forms of further training of teachers are organized by way of correspondence courses. At present 3,000 teachers attend correspondence courses at the State Higher Pedagogical Schools, and more than 7,000 study at the Teachers Courses.

In the current school year many former teachers have been observed to give up other occupations and return to the teaching profession, as a result of the rise in teachers salaries and the reduction going on in administration services.

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### The Educational Congress

The Educational Congress, organized by the Polish Teachers Union in Warsaw, from 2-5 May, 1957, was an important event for the further development of education in Poland. More than 500 outstanding teachers and pedagogues from all over the country took part in it. Also foreign guests from France, Yugoslavia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, England and Italy took part in the Congress. Among them there was a well-known psychologist, professor Jean Piaget, the Director of the International Bureau of Education in Geneva.

The Educational Congress held the public interest. Its aim was the evaluation of the existing situation in education and setting out chief tasks for the near and more distant future.

The debates and discussions were held for two days in Committees and Sections.

Theses and motions which were put forward on the closing day of the Congress were worked out by Committees, 13 in number, including the committee of the curricula and methods on teaching, of the structure and organization of education, of training of teachers, of economic problems in education, of physical education and hygiene, of pedagogic science, of school administration, of educational and youth problems.

The discussion was based on the papers delivered at the plenary session of the Congress. These concerned the following questions: "The evaluation of the present situation in education and the prospects of development of our educational system", "The problems of independent ethics", "The ways of development of the socialist pedagogy", "Hygiene and physical education at school". The materials prepared by the Congress will be used in the work of the Ministry of Education. They will also <sup>be</sup> used as guiding principles for the Pedagogical Congress which will take place in 1959. The character of that Congress will be scientific.

The problem of the new system of education was discussed with special animation and interest. Different suggestions were put forward: 7 + 5, that is the seven-form primary school and the 5-year lyceum, which means the prolongation of the time of study by 1 year in the general education lyceum; there were

also the adherents to the idea of division of lyceum into two cycles: 3 + 2 or 2 + 3, to differentiate higher grades concerning different side and type. Also the projects of 8 + 4 and 10 + 2 were put forward. In present conditions the project of 7 + 5 seems to be most practical.

Much criticism was also made in connection with existing curricula and textbooks. The Section of Curricula brought to the fore the following principal proposals:

- 1/ There is an urgent need to disburden the pupils, by means of the cuts in the curricula of some subjects and the reduction of the weekly number of working hours to 30-32 hours a week.
- 2/ The balance between humanities and scientific and art subjects should be maintained. The number of hours given to such subjects as drawing, manual work, singing and physical education should be increased.
- 3/ The number of hours designed for foreign languages, including Latin, should be increased.

A very interesting and exhaustive discussion took place in the Section of Education. The discussion was centred around the problem of bringing up children in the spirit of mutual respect among nations, and in conformity with the ideas of socialism. It was considered also in what way these noblest ideals should be instilled in children's minds, and how to adapt the methods of work to the intellectual and psychological capacities of children.

In the Section of Education much time was also devoted to the discussion on developing the capacity of pupils for independent and critical thinking.

In general one must state that the Educational Congress considerably contributed to the information of public opinion on the condition and the needs of education; it contributed also to the working out of new concepts and projects for the further expansion of education in Poland. The Congress being organized by the Polish Teachers' Union and the delegates to the Congress being prominent teachers and educators it may be considered as some kind of an educational parliament which passed a professional criticism on the educational policy of the school authorities and put forward the future tasks in the field of education. That is why the resolutions and motions of the Congress will constitute the basis of work for the Ministry of Education in the following years.